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RETAIL PRICES - MARCH QUARTER, 1960

Index numbers of retail prices for the March quarter of 1960 (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1000) were as shown below.

"C" Series Retail Price Index Numbers and Percentage Increases, March Quarter, 1960

City	Aggregate All Groups			All Groups, excluding Price Movements in Potatoes and Onions		
	Index Number	Increase from-		Index Number	Increase from-	
		March Qtr., 1959	Dec. Qtr., 1959		March Qtr., 1959	Dec. Qtr., 1959
		%	%		%	%
Brisbane ..	2630	3.1	0.6	2657	3.7	0.5
Toowoomba ..	2571	3.0	0.6	2594	3.6	0.5
Rockhampton	2640	3.2	0.6	2662	3.8	0.4
Townsville ..	2805	3.9	0.9	2833	4.4	0.8
Bundaberg ..	2609	3.0	0.5	2639	4.0	0.5
Weighted Average						
Five Towns	2638	3.2	0.6	2665	3.8	0.6

During the March quarter, 1960, the "C" Series index number for Brisbane increased by 0.6 per cent., which was slightly less than the average quarterly increase of recent times. The rise of 3.1 per cent. over the twelve month period was also below average. Other Queensland cities for which the index is compiled recorded very similar upward trends except Townsville, where the rise was slightly greater.

Food and grocery items accounted for approximately half of the total rise in Brisbane, mainly because of the substantial seasonal increase in egg prices. Onion prices increased to well above normal for this period of the year, while potato prices were virtually unchanged. The combined effect of potatoes and onions, the prices of which have sometimes been subject to violent seasonal fluctuations during recent years, had very little effect on the index this quarter, so that the rise of 0.5 per cent. in the Brisbane index excluding potato and onion prices was almost the same as for the complete index. Meat prices, which rose during the previous two quarters, remained practically the same during the recent quarter in all cities except Townsville, where the upward trend continued.

A slight upward movement was apparent in the clothing and footwear and rent groups of the index in Brisbane, with the miscellaneous section again reflecting little variation.

Changes in sections of the index are shown in the following table.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases^a, March Quarter, 1960

City	Food and Groceries			Clothing and Footwear		Miscellaneous Items	
	From Year Ended June, 1939	From Dec. Quarter, 1959		From Year Ended June, 1939	From Dec. Quarter, 1959	From Year Ended June, 1939	From Dec. Quarter, 1959
	A	A	B				
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane	254.8	0.7	0.5	317.9	0.5	151.4	0.2
Toowoomba	263.8	1.0	0.7	320.1	0.7	149.1	0.0
Rockhampton	243.1	1.1	0.6	310.2	0.3	165.9	-0.0
Townsville	246.9	1.8	1.6	313.7	0.4	163.6	0.2
Bundaberg	246.1	0.8	0.9	316.7	0.4	152.3	0.1

^a a Minus (-) indicates a decrease.

Food and Groceries

The increase in the food and grocery group varied from 0.7 per cent. in Brisbane to 1.8 per cent. in Townsville. Egg prices increased substantially in all cities and onions slightly in all cities, while potatoes remained practically unchanged except in Rockhampton where a slight increase was evident. In Townsville meat prices rose but they remained virtually unchanged in Brisbane and the other three cities. Canned fruits showed a slight tendency to decrease in price in all cities.

Clothing and Footwear

The small upward movement in this group varied from 0.3 per cent. in Rockhampton to 0.7 per cent. in Toowoomba. Small price rises were spread over a number of items with women's wear providing the bulk of the increase.

Miscellaneous

This group of the index showed no appreciable variation, the greatest increase being only 0.2 per cent. in Brisbane and Townsville.

Rent (4 and 5 roomed houses)

The rent index increased in Rockhampton, 1.0 per cent., and in Brisbane, 0.8 per cent., but remained unchanged elsewhere.

Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates

The Commonwealth industrial authority suspended automatic ("cost of living") adjustments after the adjustments which operated from the beginning of the first pay-period in August, 1953. Since that date, adjustments to the basic wages have been made from time to time, often on special applications, both by the Commonwealth and State industrial authorities. The last variation made by the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission was an addition of 15s. to the male basic wage with corresponding adjustments to the female and juvenile rates and operated from 11th June, 1959. In its 1960 judgment (12th April) the Commission decided that no alteration should be made to the Commonwealth basic wage. At present, the New South Wales basic wage alone is varied automatically with movements of the index numbers. In Queensland and Western Australia, the State Industrial Courts have usually varied the wage after the index numbers have been published. Following publication of the index numbers for the March quarter, 1960, the Queensland State Industrial Court added 2s. to both the male and female basic wage rates. In Sydney, an "automatic" increase of 2s. was applied to the male basic wage rate and 1s.6d. to the female rate. In Perth, 4s.10d. was added to the male basic wage whilst the female basic wage of £10 11s. 2d. (which was declared following the judgment of the Western Australian Industrial Court on 30th January, 1960) was increased by 3s.7d. In Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania there was no change.

Current basic wage rates are given in the following table.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates
Australian Capital Cities

Capital City	Retail Price Index				Commonwealth Basic Wage	State Basic Wage			
	Dec. Qtr., 1959		March Qtr., 1960		Males ^a	Males	Females	Date of Operation	
	A	B	A	B					
					£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.		
Brisbane ..	2615	2644	2630	2657	12 18 0	13 11 0	9 6 0	2.5.60	
Sydney ..	2744	2754	2768	2779	14 3 0	14 5 0	10 13 6	1.5.60b	
Melbourne ..	2738	2729	2755	2752	13 15 0	13 15 0	10 6 0	22.6.59	
Adelaide ..	2690	2689	2739	2749	13 11 0	13 11 0	10 3 0	15.6.59b	
Perth ..	2824	2821	2869	2869	13 16 0	14 6 4	10 14 9	2.5.60	
Hobart ..	2846	2851	2865	2869	14 2 0	14 2 0	10 11 6	1.7.59b	

Note.— A includes, and B excludes, price movements due to potatoes and onions.

a Operative first pay-period beginning on or after 11th June, 1959. The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

b These rates operate from the first pay-period commencing on or after the date shown.

The "C" Series Retail Price Index

(Base for Each Section: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-27 = 1000)

City	Year Ended June, 1939	Year Ended Dec., 1959	Year Ended March, 1960	Quarter Ended-				
				March, 1959	June, 1959	Sept., 1959	Dec., 1959	March, 1960
1. Aggregate - All Groups								
Brisbane ..	863	2578	2598	2550	2552	2595	2615	2630
Toowoomba ..	851	2521	2539	2497	2494	2537	2555	2571
Rockhampton ..	861	2588	2608	2558	2561	2608	2623	2640
Townsville ..	912	2728	2755	2700	2695	2737	2781	2805
Bundaberg ..	841	2559	2579	2532	2538	2571	2596	2609
Weighted Average Five Towns ..	864	2584	2605	2557	2558	2600	2622	2638
2. All Groups EXCLUDING price movements of potatoes and onions (a)								
Brisbane ..	863	2599	2622	2562	2575	2613	2644	2657
Toowoomba ..	851	2538	2560	2504	2513	2553	2581	2594
Rockhampton ..	861	2606	2631	2564	2581	2629	2651	2662
Townsville ..	912	2750	2780	2714	2718	2758	2811	2833
Bundaberg ..	841	2579	2604	2537	2557	2596	2625	2639
Weighted Average Five Towns ..	864	2604	2629	2568	2580	2619	2650	2665
3. Food and Groceries								
Brisbane ..	856	2972	2995	2945	2919	3006	3016	3037
Toowoomba ..	814	2906	2922	2898	2870	2925	2931	2961
Rockhampton ..	895	2996	3026	2952	2953	3042	3038	3071
Townsville ..	955	3196	3225	3195	3119	3213	3256	3313
Bundaberg ..	903	3044	3076	2995	3003	3077	3099	3125
Weighted Average Five Towns ..	864	2986	3010	2961	2934	3019	3030	3055
4. Food and Groceries EXCLUDING price movements of potatoes and onions (a)								
Brisbane ..	856	3033	3067	2981	2987	3063	3101	3118
Toowoomba ..	814	2954	2981	2916	2923	2971	3004	3026
Rockhampton ..	895	3052	3094	2972	3010	3104	3121	3139
Townsville ..	955	3263	3302	3242	3185	3277	3346	3398
Bundaberg ..	903	3101	3152	3010	3057	3152	3185	3214
Weighted Average Five Towns ..	864	3046	3081	2994	2999	3076	3114	3135
5. Clothing and Footwear								
Brisbane ..	829	3378	3412	3331	3353	3382	3447	3464
Toowoomba ..	829	3392	3426	3347	3366	3396	3459	3483
Rockhampton ..	845	3387	3417	3346	3360	3385	3455	3466
Townsville ..	840	3386	3421	3337	3363	3384	3461	3475
Bundaberg ..	839	3412	3444	3369	3386	3411	3482	3496
Weighted Average Five Towns ..	831	3381	3414	3334	3356	3384	3450	3467

(a) Excluded as from September Quarter, 1955.